

B¹ cancelled
(b) heat-treating the substrate in the treatment atmosphere of which the oxygen concentration has been lowered so as not cause oxidation to the coating solution; and

(c) returning the treatment atmosphere to that with the original oxygen concentration after completing said heat treatment and cooling the substrate to a temperature lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes.

B²
5. (Once Amended) The method as set forth in claim 2,
wherein said step (a) replaces the treatment atmosphere with inert gas when the temperature is lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes.

6. (Once Amended) The method as set forth in claim 2,
wherein the step (c) exposes the substrate to air after the passage of a predetermined time from the completion of said heat treatment.

B³
8. (Once Amended) The method as set forth in claim 2,
wherein said step (c) exposes the substrate to air when the temperature of the substrate becomes lower than a predetermined value.

Please add the following new claims:

B⁴
25. (New) A method to heat-treat a substrate coated with a coating solution which oxidizes at a high temperature, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) lowering an oxygen concentration of a treatment atmosphere when a temperature of the substrate is lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes while the substrate is being held on support pins capable of appearing and disappearing from and into a holding and heating member for supporting the substrate apart from the holding and heating member;

(b) heat-treating the substrate in the treatment atmosphere of which the oxygen concentration has been lowered so as not cause oxidation to the coating solution; and

(c) returning the treatment atmosphere to that with the original oxygen concentration after completing said heat treatment and cooling the substrate to a temperature lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes.

26. (New) A method to heat-treat a substrate coated with a coating solution which oxidizes at a high temperature, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) lowering an oxygen concentration of a treatment atmosphere when a temperature of the substrate is lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes;

(b) heat-treating the substrate held on a supporting and heating member via support pins capable of appearing and disappearing from and into the holding and heating member in the treatment atmosphere of which the oxygen concentration has been lowered so as ^{not} cause oxidation to the coating solution; and

(c) returning the treatment atmosphere to that with the original oxygen concentration after completing said heat treatment and cooling the substrate to a temperature lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes.

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cancel
27. (New) A method to heat-treat a substrate coated with a coating solution which oxidizes at a temperature, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) lowering an oxygen concentration of a treatment atmosphere when a temperature of the substrate is lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes;

(b) heat-treating the substrate in the treatment atmosphere of which the oxygen concentration has been lowered so as ^{not} cause oxidation to the coating solution; and

(c) returning the treatment atmosphere to that with the original oxygen concentration after completing said heat treatment and cooling the substrate on a cooling plate to a temperature lower than the temperature at which the coating solution oxidizes, the substrate being apart from the cooling plate by supporting pins disposed adjustably in height on the cooling plate.